

GET CONNECTED

Dowlen Road, February 1, 2009 PM

INTRODUCTION:

- A. When I was growing up, parents would always send their daughters out on dates with two quarters.
 - 1. If she had any problems while she was out, she could use the quarters to call her dad from a pay phone so he come and get her.
 - 2. Of course, kids today don't understand this. Most have a cell phone.
 - 3. Even if you don't have one yet because mom and dad believe it's not time, you probably will have one at some point in the near future. Four out of five teens carry a cell phone. 50% of 8-12 year olds carry one.

- B. I don't think it's simply indulgence that is driving this dramatic rise in cell phone popularity. I think it's all about staying connected.
 - 1. As a parent, I like being able to talk to my kids at virtually any moment. When they're out at night, I like knowing where they are and that everything is okay.
 - 2. For kids, cell phones are all about staying connected with their friends.
 - a. Get these kids in a room and watch. They may not be talking on the phone, but they will be text messaging each other.
 - b. It goes on constantly. My kids can rack up 20,000 text messages in a month. It's the way kids communicate today. They can carry on conversations with a half dozen friends all at the same time.
 - c. I'm not suggesting this is a bad thing, provided kids keep their balance and don't text too much or at the wrong time (Bible class, worship, driving). In fact, I like the fact that I regularly get text messages from kids asking Bible questions or the time for the next devotions.

- C. But if all of this is about staying connected, I do think there is an important question to be asked: who am I connecting with?
 - 1. Get your cell phone out. Look back through your recent calls and texts. Note the names. If you don't have one, think about the people you've talked with on the phone or emailed or just talked with at work or school.
 - 2. Don't just look at the names. Think about the people behind the names. Who are these people? What kind of character do they have? What kinds of things do they talk about? What advice do they give you?
 - 3. At a time when technology allows us to stay connected more than ever before, we need to give some serious thought to the kind of connections we are making.
 - 4. We need to consider the Bible warnings about making wrong connections.

WRONG CONNECTIONS YOU MUST AVOID

- A. Solomon warned us about this danger (Proverbs 1). He says that there were two voices we will hear (1:8-9).
 - 1. The first is the voice of our parents offering instruction and teaching.
 - 2. But we will also hear a second voice (1:10). This is the voice of people around you – kids in the neighborhood, at school, on the ball team.
 - 3. Some of these kids are up to no good and they will try to pull you in.
 - a. Young people in Solomon's day faced the same problem (1:11-14).
 - b. At that time, a young man might find himself tempted to hook up with a gang of criminals. They might lure him in with the promise of quick money and wealth.
 - 4. Things are a little different today. Most of you are probably tempted by the prospect of joining a gang and pursuing a life of crime. But that voice of the crowd is still out there, talking to you, trying to lure you into sin.
 - a. It might be a group of friends who try to lure you into a movie you shouldn't see.
 - b. It might be a boyfriend/girlfriend who tries to persuade you to have sex.
 - c. It might be a friend who tries to get you to lie to your parents about where you're going Friday night.
 - d. It might be a friend who is always talking about crude things and tries to draw you into the same kind of conversation.
 - e. It might be a boy who tries to get you to take inappropriate, explicit pictures with your camera phone and send them to him.
 - f. It might be someone who doesn't care about God or spiritual things. The more you are with them the less you care about spiritual things.
 - 5. The voice is still out there – the voice of the evil crowd who is doing wrong and trying to get you to join them.

- B. Look back at your phone and the names you've called and texted recently.
 - 1. Are there people like this on your list?
 - a. Are the people you are talking to and texting every day – the people you're connected with – the kind that will help you get to heaven?
 - b. Or, are they part of the other voice that constantly tugs at you and tries to pull you away from God and into conversations and conduct that you know are wrong? Look at your list; who is on it?
 - 2. If there are some names that don't belong, you need to do something about that. God speaks to us about cutting our ties with people that lead us in the wrong direction.
 - a. "Don't make friends with quick-tempered people or spend time with those who have bad tempers. If you do, you will be like them. Then you will be in real danger" (Proverbs 22:24-25).
 - 1) The principle does not only apply to people with bad tempers. The choice to hang with the wrong crowd – whatever their evil – puts us at risk. We can learn their evil ways.
 - 2) These are not the people we need to be connected with.
 - b. "Do not be fooled: 'Bad friends ruin good habits.'" (I Corinthians 15:33) I need to cut my ties with the people in my life that are dragging me away from God and His will for my life.
 - 3. While this may be hard, Solomon gives us all the incentive we need to do it (Proverbs 1:15-19).
 - a. Rejecting God and choosing sin only leads to trouble and misery. Nothing good will come from this.
 - b. This passage has a special place in my memory.

- 1) In 1999 I attended the execution of a Christian I met working on death row – Ricky Blackmon. Ricky would tell you that he destroyed his life by choosing to run with the wrong crowd.
- 2) As I walked from the Huntsville Unit on the night he died, I thought about this verse (1:18). He had indeed ambushed his own life.
- 3) Don't make the same mistake. Don't destroy your life because you choose to make some bad connections. Make better choices.

THREE CONNECTIONS YOU NEED TO MAKE

- A. You need to connect with your mom and dad (Proverbs 1:8).
1. Solomon makes an assumption in this verse. He assumes that moms and dads will provide instruction for their children to follow.
 - a. As parents, we need to make sure we do this. We need to talk to our kids. One of the most important things a parent can do is make time to open up a dialog with their kids.
 - b. Start when they are young. Ask them about their day. Listen patiently as you are given every detail about the kick ball game at recess.
 - c. Then, we need to keep doing this.
 - 1) Make it a point every day to come in the door, find your kids and take a few minutes to find out about their day.
 - 2) If you're having breakfast together or taking them to school, talk about their plans.
 - 3) Text your kids and ask them how their day is going.
 - 4) FIND WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR KIDS!
 - d. As we find out what is happening with them, we will be able to bring God's word to bear on their lives and their decisions.
 2. But young people need to understand that they have a duty in this process as well. You need to engage this process with your parents.
 - a. Sometimes we don't do a lot of talking because you don't have much to say. You keep your life closed off.
 - b. Let your parents in; let them be part of your life. Tell them what's going on with you. Ask for their advice. Listen to what they say. Act on it (1:8, "hear," "do not forsake").
 - c. You need to do this because God says to do it. But Solomon gives you another reason (1:9).
 - 1) Taking the risk, connecting with your mom and dad, holds the promise of wonderful blessings in your life.
 - 2) God says you're going to be blessed by closer connections with mom and dad. Do you believe it?
- B. You need to connect with godly friends.
1. If I could look at your phone, I would hope to find that the people you are connecting with most frequently are in this group.
 - a. We had a young man travel to Mexico with us a few years ago. He shared with us that there were only three kids in his Bible class back home, and one of them was his sister. He is serving God in his situation, but it is harder and lonely.
 - b. You have a great blessing with so many other young people around you who want to serve God. Just as evil companions can corrupt you, righteous companions can encourage you to do right.
 - c. Get connected with these people.
 2. Some might complain that they don't feel connected or that other Christians exclude them. Let's do something about that. How do I make connections with other?
 - a. Be where they are. Any time these guys are getting together for whatever reason, you go too. Go to Bible studies and devotions. Moms and dads need to stop making activities like these optional. Gently insist that your kids go. They need these connections.
 - b. Extend yourself. Host a Bible study at your house. Invite some of the kids to hang out at your place. Plan an activity. Don't wait for others; you take the first step.
 - c. Ask for help. If it's just not working out, ask for help to get connected. We want to help you do that.
 3. There is a great benefit in having each other.
 - a. Don't squander this wonderful blessing by remaining disconnected from this great group.
 - b. Worse yet, don't put your faith at risk by connecting with the wrong crowd (I Corinthians 15:33). We've lost too many of our young people this way! Get connected with other Christians.
- C. You need to connect with God.
1. Of course, this is our most important connection. We must have a meaningful relationship with our God.
 - a. Jesus died to make this possible. His blood removes the barrier that stand between us and God – sin! (Romans 5:10) God wants to rescue you from sin and its terrible consequences.
 - b. But that's not all. He also wants to be your friend, someone you can depend on in times of trouble (I Peter 5:6-7). Think about it: the Creator of the universe wants the two of you to be close, to talk all the time, to be connected!
 2. But it's not a connection you will make with your cell phone. There are two things we must do to draw close to God.
 - a. I need to pray. I need to go out every day with a sense of His presence – He is with me, watching over me, etc. With that thought in mind, just pause all the time and talk to Him (I Thessalonians 5:17).
 - b. I need to study the Bible. God will not speak to us out of the heavens or in a dream. He communicates His will in this book. Every time you read your Bible, God is saying something to you. He is speaking to us about how He wants us to live, how to handle problems, words of encouragement to push us forward, words of rebuke to straighten us out, etc. Every day you need to pick up this book and let God talk with you. You need to get connected with Him.

CONCLUSION:

If you have sin in your life, it will stand as a barrier between you and God that prevents you from connecting with Him. You need to get rid of it. If you've never obeyed the gospel, you need to do that now. If you have but turned back to sin, it's time to make things right.